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# FOREIGN NEWS

IN CHARGE OF  
LAVINIA L. DOCK

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## LETTERS

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### FROM OUR SPECIAL ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

(Continued from page 523)

#### ARMY NURSING IN SOUTH AFRICA

To the nursing world here the topic of the hour is the care of the sick and wounded in South Africa. Following on his courageous action in making known to the public through the press the condition of our poor soldiers at the front, Mr. Burdett-Coutts, M.P., has just issued a brochure entitled "The Sick and Wounded in South Africa." It is a calm statement of facts, and will rank as a reliable reference on the subject years hence, when the heat and bitterness of party politics have died away. The book contains a valuable suggestion as to organization in future wars, namely, that base hospitals should, as pressure upon the army corps increases, be deputed to civilian care by the government. The regular medical staff, Army Sisters, or male orderlies would thus be free to move on to the front, and adequate provision would be made for the sick without maintaining an unwieldy and unduly large army corps in times of peace.

Following close upon this book came the "Report of the Hospitals Commission," which was eagerly awaited, and which is a voluminous Blue Book of 70 folios. To review this "Report" adequately I should require your whole JOURNAL, but I must tell you that the commission recommend the appointment at an early date of a departmental or other committee of experts, military and medical, to report on a number of suggestions, from which I quote those of special concern to us:

"3. The attraction to the Royal Army Medical Corps of a sufficient and regular supply of officers of good professional attainments; and the improvement of the position of the officers by the allowance of sufficient holidays; and by provisions enabling them to become adequately acquainted with the advancements in medical and surgical science; and the necessity of employing in the higher posts men selected for their merits rather than by seniority.

"4. The employment, to a greater extent than that recognized and practised until the later stages of this war, of nurses in fixed hospitals for the care of the wounded and of fever and dysenteric patients, and such others as can properly be nursed by females.

"5. The appointment of properly qualified officers of the Royal Army Medical Corps to undertake sanitary duties.

"And with regard to other matters:

"6. The improvement of existing ambulance wagons.

"7. The selection and employment of the form of hospital tents best suited for the reception of sick and wounded in a campaign."

The anomalous position of women at the present time can be gauged from the fact that though it was the duty of the commission to consider and report upon the care and treatment of the sick and wounded during the South African campaign, no trained superintendent of nursing was placed upon it to give expert assistance or practical nursing points.

So egregious did this omission appear to the leaders of the nursing profession in England, that the Matrons' Council felt compelled to bring it to the notice of the leader of the House of Commons; not with any hope, I am bound to own, that a trained nurse would be added to the members of the commission.

Nor was she!

Trained nurses on both sides the Atlantic will notice with regret that no mention is made of a nursing expert to coöperate with the military and medical experts, recommended for this committee to thrash out the question of army medical and nursing reforms.

And this at a moment when the whole world combines to acclaim a woman the greatest monarch of the ages!

UNION JACK.

[Our interesting and public-spirited correspondent does indeed put her finger here upon an inconsistency; yet it is no greater than that which obtains between the cruel and ruthless Genius of War and the cherishing and guardian care of the Woman Spirit, so that it has never been incomprehensible to us that there should be the conflict between the two. Hasten the day when civilian hospitals so abound in the realms of war, and women nurses so replace the old orderly, that the war spirit may die away and give place to a better kind of civilization.—Ed.]

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#### FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT IN ITALY

(Continued from page 447)

##### OSPEDALE CLINICO, NAPLES, ITALY.

The nurses take temperature, pulse, and respiration, do up the bed-patients and wash and comb the others, catheterize and give douches, prepare for surgical rounds and medical emergencies and assist at operations, distribute the medicines and give hypodermics. Of late they have even been allowed to undertake the parenchymatous hypodermic injections which the doctors here prefer for the mercurial treatment.

What they do not do I will try to explain.

They are not allowed to make temperature charts, lest they should presently usurp others of the doctors' functions, but I have taught them unofficially to keep special charts of any interesting case.

They may not make beds in the morning except for regular bed patients, the bed-making time being four P.M., and not every day of the week either. In the men's wards the servants are forbidden to turn the mattresses except on Thursdays and Sundays, though the sheets may be changed several times a day. There is *carte-blanc* in regard to linen. The reasons for this extraordinary

regulation are two: first, because the floors are washed daily at five A.M. by the servants, and any subsequent bed-making would nullify their work (sweeping being also prohibited), and, second, because there is so much phthisis in the wards that it is inadvisable to make much dust; for the same reason sheets are not allowed to be shaken out in the wards.

Bed baths are permitted in theory, but are merely tolerated in practice. For this reason I have to get them done in the early morning, before the directors and the ward doctors appear, lest on some inauspicious day they be prohibited altogether. And this in the women's wards. In the men's wards, although I might myself bathe any patient, the permission is not extended to my nurses, who may only wash the men's faces and hands. The general ablutions are entrusted to the servants, who take advantage of the loop-hole of escape and bathe no one. Nor can I insist.

Diets are entirely out of the province of the nurse, except in the matter of feeding helpless patients, and under no circumstances would she be allowed to enter the kitchen. Before the training is finished they will go through a course of cooking, but it will be given outside the hospital. Except in special cases, the diets consist of full rations, half rations, and liquid. There is no such thing as our soft diet, for the Neapolitans do not eat puddings or custards, and would turn in disgust from milk-toast. The full ration is: one loaf of bread, a bowl of macaroni, two pieces of meat, a glass of wine, and a plate of fruit, all distributed at the midday meal. For breakfast and supper one glass of milk is allotted to each patient, who takes it with whatever he may have saved from dinner, the macaroni only not being allowed to be kept. The ward cleaning is done by the servants, of whom there are three to each ward. Their business is to keep the place dusted, washed, and burnished, and I must say for them that, with due allowance for circumstances, they do their work well. The director does not wish the nurses to interfere with this part of the work as a rule, so that they only do it in exceptional cases. I feel the less troubled about this, as all my nurses are taught housework at home.

The disinfection of utensils, linen, etc., and the sterilization of nozzles, catheters, and instruments are entrusted to the nurses.

Medical rounds are carried on in a very delicate manner when we are present, a feature due to the refining influence of the chief. Even in the men's wards there is nothing which could shock the most puritanical mind, so that the pupils' parents, who at first stipulated that their daughters should nurse only women, now prefer these wards to the others. The only difference in the system of rounds is that the ward doctors' assistant takes down the orders instead of the head nurse. The prescriptions are written out daily for each patient by the assistant, the ward doctor signing.

The medicines, already diluted when in the liquid form, arrive at about mid-day, done up in different packets and bottles, with the number of each patient pasted on the label, where the prescription is written out in full, and the dose is enough for twenty-four hours. This arrangement was originally made, I suppose, to prevent mistakes when the servants were entrusted with the distribution of drugs. As my nurses do not remain at night, it is just as well to let it remain. There is, however, in the closet a supply of medicines which the nurses distribute after rounds, and among them are also the drugs for hypodermic use and for emergencies.

G. BAXTER.

## A LINE FROM BRAZIL

A MOST friendly letter has been received from Miss Jackson, matron of the Strangers' Hospital, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, expressing interest in the Congress, from which we quote a few lines:

"I am only sorry that I shall not be able to avail myself of that great treat (the Congress), but, unfortunately, my holiday does not fall due again until the following year, when I do hope to visit the States and go through some of the hospitals that I have heard so much about. . . ."

"This part of America must be very different from yours. . . . I came out here as one of the pioneer nurses in 1892, and after two years was made matron. I can hardly describe to you the matron's duties,—everything; we have no resident medical man, so that I am responsible for all, make out all patients' accounts, keep the register, and very often have to do the cooking, as the servants have a way of leaving without any notice whatever. My staff consists of four trained nurses, one from St. Bartholomew's, my own school, one from the London, one from Guy's, and one from St. George's. I have one male nurse, trained in yellow fever only. . . . My great regret is that I shall not be able to be with you next September. If I can help in any way, please let me know, and I shall be delighted to do so. . . ."

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## FROM CUBA

GENERAL HOSPITAL, PUERTO PRINCIPE, CUBA.

This hospital was organized by Mrs. Quintard, assisted by Miss Mitchell, a graduate of St. Luke's. They undertook to turn this old barracks into a model hospital, and have succeeded admirably in doing so. In the first place, we are beautifully situated on the northern border of the town; the landscape all around is most attractive,—too much so, perhaps, as it is a great temptation to stand gazing out of the windows,—well, we have no windows; a pane of glass is almost an unknown quantity in Cuba, but there are immense window-frames,—and for perfectly pure air this hospital is ahead of any I have ever visited; a balmy breeze is constantly passing through the wards. It is fully equipped with the most modern of everything. The operating-room is all that could be desired, and the pharmacy is much more elaborately fixed up than the usual hospital pharmacy. There are seven American nurses and twenty-five native young women who do not know a word of English, so you will understand it is an absolute necessity for us to learn Spanish. . . .

The people in the States have an idea that Cuba is almost the most unhealthy place there is, but the opinion I have formed of it is that this part is decidedly healthy. We have no acute cases; the typhoid, pneumonia, diphtheria, and scarlet-fever germs do not seem to exist down here, and there has only been one case of yellow fever in Puerto Principe in two years. Cases of malaria, rheumatism, and tuberculosis are plentiful. The nurses, however, get a thorough surgical training. The nurses' quarters are in an old and very large building like an old Spanish castle, and are very pleasant to live in. . . .

JEAN. T. KAY

(Graduate Brooklyn Hospital).

**THE NURSES IN CHINA**

UNITED STATES GENERAL HOSPITAL, PEKING, CHINA, December 31.

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Miss Kemner and I are at the officers' hospital; the other four nurses are at the General Hospital, about a mile from here. They go back and forth in the ambulances twice a day, wrapped up in furs, and declare they do not feel the cold in the least.

We have been out in the ambulances several times, and are soon to visit the Forbidden City. Our troops are encamped in tents in the grounds surrounding the Temple of Agriculture. The British troops are quartered in the Temple of Heaven, while the Germans under Count Waldersee have possession of the Summer Palace. Our men consider themselves the most abused, as they are the only ones in tents this winter, but all our severe pneumonia cases have been brought from the companies living in Chinese houses, those in tents escaping thus far. . . .

You would enjoy your first ride in a Peking cart drawn by a little donkey. The cart has no springs, but is a big, box-shaped affair set on two cumbersome wheels,—the top, sides, and front covered with some gay-colored cloth, generally a shade of blue. I have tried riding in one, and it is not the most comfortable vehicle in the world. You have to sit with your feet doubled up under you in order to have room for the rest of your body to sway back and forth, bumping first on one side and then on the other, until you are bruised all over and vow you will never get in one again. . . .

The climate is very fine, except for the frequent dust-storms. Just now I hear the loud clapping of a sort of wooden tub held in the hands of a Chinese watchman who passes up and down the streets, beating on the wooden affair with a stick to frighten away thieves. They have a custom also of placing a light at the front door at night to ward off evil spirits.

About five o'clock every morning we are awakened by the loud clanging of the bells worn by the camels; you should see the string of those poor, patient animals going by loaded with coal, fruit, and other baggage.

The great wall of Peking, with its watch-towers as large as chapels and the ponderous iron gates, looks very formidable, I can assure you. The top of the wall would make quite a nice wagon-road; vehicles can pass each other without difficulty. . . .

H. McRAE.

[Miss McRae is a graduate of a Texas hospital, and before joining the army nurses was in charge of Salome Hospital, Cuero, Texas.—ED.]

